

Lamtech, Inc.
Andrew B. Givens, Owner

SBA Success Story
April 8, 2008

Andy Givens, who owns Lamtech, Inc. in Florence, AL, loved to work with wood as a adolescent. High school shop classes at Wilson High (Lauderdale County) and Allen Thornton Vo-tech School in Killen only intensified his natural inclination. He appreciated working with wood - cutting it, shaping it, polishing it. He particularly enjoyed seeing how the final product of his woodworking would turn out.

Andy graduated from high school in 1985.

He started Lamtech - then named Fixture Perfect - in 1992, but it was only after a lot of research and counseling from the local Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at the University of North Alabama (UNA) while he held various jobs. While he attended SBDC workshops, he heard something he has never forgotten: a local businessman got up; and told the audience that "...as long as you are happy, you are successful." It has stuck in his mind to this day.

Later a SBDC counselor helped Andy prepare his business plan. That enabled him to find start-up financing by applying for loan. "I didn't have the plan complete," Andy said, "and I was awfully young." The loan application failed. But with help from his father, he was able to get enough money to open his business. He started, as most businesses do, small. He worked at it part-time.

His first business location was his 700 square foot garage, in which he concentrated on re-laminating and refurbishing of store fixtures. He also built custom cabinets for residences and businesses. By 1996 Andy was in business full-time. Book-A-Million, the large regional book store chain, was his first major customer.

Andy helped Book-A-Million refurbish its fixtures so they could minimize buying new ones. He still serves them today. He continued to attend the SBDC workshops, learning what he could about marketing, business operations, and other helpful topics.

Lamtech now occupies 21,000 sq ft. in a new building on County Road 8 in Lauderdale County (built in 2003 out of proceeds from a \$750,000 504 loan). Givens has overseen the business' growth. His primary product (70 percent of his work) had been until recently cabinets for new coastal condominiums in Florida, where he helped construct four new condominiums, and in Alabama.

Since that business has dried up, he concentrates on building custom residential cabinets for local apartment complexes. He still does some cabinetry work for local schools and hospitals. His latest year's annual revenues exceed \$750,000.

Andy operates on a set of values that put the customer first. Beginning with courteous and prompt service, Lamtech strives daily to meet deadline commitments. Andy's three employees – at one time he employed 14 - work hard to satisfy customers.

"I still enjoy the work. If I didn't, I would do something else. But seeing what comes out of my labor and vision gives me the same satisfaction it did at school shop class years ago," Givens said.

Andy is happy – and successful. He appreciates the help he got from the SBDC and from SBA. Based on the repeat business from former clients and referrals to new prospects, they certainly meet that customer service test.

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